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ABSTRACT

Future changes in the characteristics of student populations, and the institutions of higher education which they attend, is becoming a concern of student affairs administrators. Among the areas in which future development could have an impact on student affairs programs are: (1) changes in the national birthrate and subsequent fall in college enrollment; (2) events in the community outside higher education institutions that may change both the political and financial support that colleges and universities have previously received; and (3) events within institutions of higher education. Examples of such events are the growth of nontraditional educational mechanisms, the marked increase in the proportion of females in undergraduate enrollment and the increased need and importance of retention programs. If student affairs programs are to remain relevant, administrators must anticipate and plan for these developments and the changes in student needs and concerns in the next 20 years. (PK)

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THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS: A FUTURISTICS EXAMINATION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

by

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The future does not just happen. It is created and developed in the present and near past. Future happenings are all rooted in the present and, in most cases, are determined by actions which have already occurred. Consequently, no one needs a crystal ball or a resident prophet to accurately project future happenings. The parameters of the future are essentially predictable.

The problem, and one which is particularly applicable to student affairs, is that we do not take the time to use the known data and methods of forecasting to project our future environments. Perhaps even more disheartening is the fact that quite often when distinct trends or developments are discovered, there is little or no attention given to them and they are quickly ignored. This situation is no longer tolerable for higher education in general and for student affairs in particular. If the present trends continue and if certain developments become general practice, student affairs as we know it will not exist in twenty years, a rather shocking but inevitable conclusion if we all continue to fail to plan for the future. If we in student affairs wish to survive as a profession, we must all become futurists. We must learn those determiners of the future which cannot be changed and those which can somehow be altered. We have truly been a reactive profession. We must become proactive. We must learn to anticipate and control our environments. If we cannot, we are doomed to become extinct! Not immediately . . . not spectacularly . . . but just as sure as other elements within higher education and society at large have disappeared when they have lost their effectiveness or have been rendered unnecessary by technological innovations or changes in the needs of society, we will also disappear as a functional element. True,

some aspects of our profession may remain, but their form and substance will be so altered that they will not be recognizeable as having any relationship to the profession as we now practice it. Change and the ever-increasing pace of change will be especially cruel to a profession which is supposed to be sensitive to developments within the student population. How often in the past have we fallen from grace because we did not anticipate changes in student needs and concerns? More importantly, how long in the future will be be able to continue if we do not anticipate, prepare and plan for such changes? Not long, I assure you! Already, many of the traditional functions of the student affairs office are being usurped by other offices, machines, and regulatory bodies which can perform those functions more efficiently and effectively because they are future-oriented and have no vested interest in continuing past programs, procedures and structures. We too must learn to adapt, to be future-oriented. If there is a role for student affairs in the next twenty years, it will be a futurist role.

I firmly believe that if we begin to plan for the future, we may have a future. Not occasional five- or ten-year plans, but consistent, thorough anticipation of the changes, trends and developments which will effect higher education in general and student affairs in particular. What we need to do is to develop new approaches, new programs, based on the realities of the future and not on our past conceptualizations. We cannot merely alter our techniques and expect to be credible and viable in the year 1990. We must reconceptualize our approach to student affairs. We must recognize that the need for many of the services that we traditionally performed has been irrevocably changed or nullified by circumstances totally beyond our control and that our techniques for providing such

services have, in many instances, been rendered obsolete by managerial and technological developments. The key to future survival is to incorporate those managerial and technological developments into our operations. We must learn to use the tools available to establish new roles for ourselves within the institutional structure. We must learn how to demonstrate that what we do is cost effective. We must learn to demonstrate that what we do has a utilitarian purpose and we must learn to justify ourselves on the basis of objective evaluation. We must learn to demonstrate accountability for our funds, staffs and programs, not because we are required to do so, but to demonstrate that we are a valid and essential element of the university system.

If the role of the faculty is teaching and the role of the student is learning, it is truly the role of the administration and, particularly, student affairs administrators to anticipate, plan and prepare for the future. No other segment of higher education is responsible for an element so crucial to the survival of the institution than student affairs. That element is, of course, students. If we falter in our efforts to adequately provide for a continuation of this element at the institution, we will fade from the institutional scene. I am not speaking of the traditional control, organization, and recruitment of students. I am speaking of those factors which will have an impact on the next twenty years. I am speaking of the recruitment and support of non-traditional students, the retention of students once they are recruited, and the presentation of programs which will satisfy the needs of the student as a consumer of higher education.

Ah, all very interesting, you say! You've heard this all before . . . but you still believe there will always be a need for student personnel administrators. Remember that old saying, "There will always be

an England"? Well, England may continue to exist, but it will never be the same as when that statement was made. Just as our old concept of England as a colonial power is no longer valid, so are our old concepts of student personnel work no longer valid.

Student personnel may exist in some form, but it will not be the form it is today. Consequently, although someone or some machine may always be needed to perform certain functions we would classify as student personnel functions, they will not necessarily be student personnel professionals. We have already today, in 1977, numerous traditional student personnel functions being taken over and administrated effectively by people who are not student affairs professionals. Marketing people are taking over admissions. Business offices and computer people are taking over financial aid. Private concerns are taking over housing. Student activities and the operation of student unions are coming under the control of directors of auxiliary services. Career planning is being increasingly computerized, and general counseling functions are being performed by psychology departments. How long will it be until your institution decides or is forced to have a student personnel function performed by a non-student affairs professional because it can be done more efficiently and more effectively in such a manner? The point I am here to make is that we, student affairs professionals, must adapt to the present and coming changes if we wish to continue to exist. If we are not future-oriented, if we do not recognize, analyze and prepare for the changing needs of our students and institutions, then we are simply relinquishing control of our destiny and we can expect that others outside our profession will slowly but surely reorganize our functions and programs to their needs with little, if any, concern for our continued

existence. Even a cursory examination of institutions of higher education will reveal that compared with other segments of the institution, student affairs probably has done the least to prepare for and project its future. Other segments of the institution have planning committees, departments of institutional research, curriculum revision committees and other such bodies which directly or indirectly plan for the future. But what have we in student affairs done to insure our future? Most of us do not have structures or bodies within our departments which regularly and systematically project our futures. Perhaps more important than not having such bodies is the fact that most of us do not see any reason for their existence or even to be future oriented.

In the last two decades, student affairs did not need to be future-oriented to survive. In the period of expansion since World War II our major decisions typically involved which new programs to establish, which buildings to construct, which staff to hire, and which office to expand to meet the ever-increasing demands of a larger and larger student body. Planning was not foremost in our minds as our mistakes were easily obliterated in a continual flow of students and funds. However, we are now in that often-talked-about, infrequently-seriously-considered no-growth period. The term no-growth is not obviously threatening. However, allow me to use the translation recently supplied by Edward B. Fiske, Education Editor or the New York Times. He said that perhaps we should think of the period we are now in not as a period of no-growth, but as a period of contraction. For, as he very simply and effectively pointed out, the two essentials for growth are no longer in ready supply: money and students. If we as student affairs administrators begin to consider the ramifications of shortages in these two essential areas, we will very

quickly realize the need to study, analyze and project our future roles in higher education. If enrollment decreases and funds diminish, who will be the first to suffer? Will it be the tenured or unionized faculty? Will it be the upper level fiscal or academic administrators? Or will it be the student affairs administrator who is involved by definition in many activities which are not absolutely necessary to the functioning of the institution? What we ourselves refer to as extra-curricular.

Obviously, I am somewhat concerned about the continuation of our profession. I do not assume that it will continue to exist and I firmly believe that there is a strong possibility that it will not exist in its present form in the not too distant future. Consequently, I have chosen to speak here today for three reasons. First, to awaken you to the need and importance of incorporating, planning and projecting in the student affairs profession. Second, to acquaint you with the techniques and methodologies of forecasting. And, third, to call your attention to some of the present trends and indicators which have significance for the student affairs administrator.

First, a brief overview of futuristics. The study of the future is known by many names — Futuristics, Future Studies, Future Research, Technological Assessment and Forecasting, and others. Simply, the field is the study of those known facts and indicators which allow us to project and forecast alternative futures with some degree of reliability. I could spend the remainder of my time explaining all the resources and techniques presently available for future planning. However, I have prepared a series of handouts which I will make available to you after the program which contain sufficient information to enable you to learn and apply the present research and techniques of future studies to your

own situations. It is not that important that you know all the methodologies of forecasting. What is important is that you develop the perspective of being future-oriented. When I say that we must all become futurists, I am not saying that we all need to become professional forecasters or certified projectors of the future. What I mean is that we all need to adopt a future perspective. We need to begin to examine data, developments and trends not just in regard to their relationship to our past performance or our present situations, but in regard to their probable effect on our future situations. We need to begin to routinely consider the future significance of the information which is readily available to us through professional materials and the common media. We need to not just acknowledge that such and such will have an effect on our area in the next ten years, but to construct and project what that effect will be and to begin to anticipate the possible courses of action that will be required of us. I am sure that everyone in this room could list for me five recent events or trends which will have an impact on student affairs. Yet, I am also sure that very few of you would be able to then tell me what the functional impact of those trends or events would be and how you have prepared to deal with those possible situations. Moreover, I am certain that many of you are legitimately so involved in conducting your current operations that you have not had the inclination or the opportunity to seriously project your future environments in light of known trends and indicators. Consequently, I believe it would be beneficial to review some of the probable developments which will have an impact on student affairs.

I suggest that there are three areas in which developments could have an impact on student affairs. I suggest that we should be sensitive to changes in these areas and incorporate such changes in our future planning.

The first area is that of Changes in National Patterns. This area seems to receive the most attention and general publicity. I call your attention to the following developments. First, the decline in the national birthrate must be considered. The decline in the birthrate means that there will simply be less people between the ages of 18 and 21 who could attend college. Original projections showed a decrease in the rate of growth of college enrollments in the 70's and a leveling in the early 80's with an increase after 1995. However, recent statistics show that the leveling may have occurred this year and that the decline may begin next year. Consequently, some sources, such as the American College Testing Service, are forecasting 20% fewer students enrolling by 1980, and the carnegie commission on higher education revised their estimate for enrollment in 1984 down 1.5 million students from the projection they made in 1971. The second major change is the change in the pattern of college attendance. In 1968, 55 percent of high school students attended college. Recently, however, that percentage has dropped to 48 percent. There seems to be numerous factors contributing to this development, but perhaps the most significant is that large numbers of young people no longer associate upward social mobility with a college degree.

These two general trends will have a significant impact on all of our institutions. The National Center for Education statistics reported a decline of 2.2 percent in the enrollment of public four-year colleges for this past fall and the state of New York estimates a decline of 20,000 students in the state's public and private colleges during the next two years. I encourage you to examine the demographics in your own states to determine what the impact will be on your own institution.

A third major change in our national patterns is the rise in the median age of Americans. Low fertility and mortality rates in combination have resulted in a population which will have a larger proportion of older people and a smaller proportion of the young. This situation, called "The Graying of America", will increase the median age from 28.9 this year to 37.3 in 2030. The number of people over 25 will continue to increase while the number in the 18-to-21-year-old category will decrease. By the year 2000, there will be 81% more adults aged 35 to 44 than at present, and the number of people over 55 will be up 27 percent. It is also calculated that by 1995, there will be a 20 percent drop in the 18-to-24-year-old population from the level of 1980. These figures are not wild-eyed predictions, but projections based on the number of births which have already occurred. Consequently, I am sure that you can readily see the present and future importance of adult education programs to the survival of your institutions. The question is, will student services be prepared to provide appropriate services to this important and growing segment of our population?

The second major area where I believe developments will haveean impact on student affairs is the Community Outside of Higher Education. I call your attention to these developments in that area. The first development is the ending of the G. I. Bill. The ending of the entitlement to the G. I. Bill occurred this year for a considerable number of veterans. This resulted in a 33 percent drop in veteran enrollment. The number of veterans losing their entitlement will continue to increase between now and 1980-81. By 1987, the G. I. Bill as we now know it will no longer exist. The second development is the decline in employment opportunities for college graduates. The supply of college graduates

presently exceeds the demand. The unemployment rate for college graduates has increased in each of the last three years. The number and proportion of college graduates in our society exceeds the number and proportion of professional and managerial positions, and there is presently no hope for expansion of those jobs. Consequently, the advantage of college graduates on the job market will decline and the rate of return on the investment in a college education will also decline. Another development is the rise of consumerism and its extension to students. Since 1970, more and more students are assuming the burden for their college expenses. This financing of their education coupled with the national rise of consumerism will probably cause a shift in student perspective to develop. Students will begin to consider themselves as customers of their colleges and develop a consumer relationship with their institutions. Numerous court cases are already pending around the country where students, believing they have not received a full measure for their money, are suing institutions for reimbursement of their funds. If may not be too long before we see the equivalent of consumer protection groups on campus. Numerous agencies of the federal government are already involved in the area of consumer protection for post-secondary education.

A fourth development is the general loss of political support for higher education. Recently, political support has shifted to other forms of post-secondary education, particularly vocationally-oriented programs, and in many states when taxpayers have had to choose between a new tax and not increasing funds for higher education, they have chosen to not increase the funds. A fifth development in the community outside of higher education is the decline in the relationship of business and higher education. Where once business went to higher education for the

training of its employees, it is now organizing its own training programs and actually establishing its own schools with all the outward signs of other colleges -- campus, dormitories, etc. Soon several of these company schools will probably be accredited to award the bachelor's degree. A sixth development is the growth of educational benefits in collective bargaining agreements. Today some six million workers are covered by negotiated tuition aids, educational leaves, and apprenticeship training programs. The inclusion of educational benefits has become one of the most significant bargaining trends in the 1970's. Are your student services areas able to service such a constituency? Still another development in this area is the increased use of audio-visual media. Perhaps it would be beneficial for student affairs areas such as financial aid, admissions and others to consider the fact that high school students are oriented to auio-visual media rather than written media. Our society at large is increasing the use of television, cassettes, and film more than written media. The importance of this phenomenon should not be taken lightly. And the final development in this category is the result of changes in the work week. Several parts of the country already have industry and government agencies operating on flex-time schedules. The four-day work week is indeed possible during the next decade. These changes now offer workers more opportunities to attend classes at times not possible in the past. We in student affairs should be prepared to offer our services at the times when such a clientele would require them.

A third area where developments will obviously have an impact on our profession is the Community Within Higher Education. I suggest you consider the following developments. First to be considered is the growth of non-traditional institutions. The growth and expansion of

colleges without walls, sattelite campuses, and other non-traditional forms of higher education should be studied by student affairs administrators. These programs are attracting large numbers of adult students because they offer programs and courses tailored to their needs. Although we may not feel that these programs are our competitors today, they surely will be in the near future as we all seek to recruit more adult students. It would be to our advantage to learn how they make themselves attractive to the non-traditional student. A second development is the growth of enrollment of women students. Women increased their proportion in the undergraduate enrollment in the last five years. According to the Census Bureau, the number of women aged 25 to 34 attending college more than doubled, while the number under 25 increased by 30 percent. The Center for Education statistics reported that if it weren't for the significant increase in the number of women enrolling at all U. S. colleges and universities this past fall, that the total enrollment would have substantially declined and not kept nearly even with the previous year as had been reported. In fact, on most campuses, women now constitute one-half of the first-year enrollment. Consequently, student affairs should be prepared to serve and retain this very important segment of our student bodies. A third development within the higher education community is the increased importance of retention programs. In the next ten years, retaining students once they have enrolled will probably become on of the most crucial challenges to institutions of higher education. Moreover, student affairs could insure a place for itself in the institutional structure if it accepted responsibility for such programs. It is less costly to retain students than to recruit them and the fact of the matter is that in the next decade, one will be very hard put to find extra

students to replace those that drop out or transfer. A fourth development in this area is the growing importance of adult students. In 1975, 3.7 million adults aged 25 or over registered for college courses . . . that was 34 percent of total college enrollments. This was a huge jump from the 1.7 million enrollments, or 22 percent of the total, in 1970. By 1980, the Census Bureau estimates, adults could form 40 percent of all total enrollments. Since the adult student is the only possible growth market for higher education, we had all better learn how to serve this new constituency. Finally in this area a development to be considered is the rise of vocationalism. A sagging economy and a tight job market have made students more vocationally-oriented. Students will seek more career counseling in the next ten years. Our student affairs and counseling centers should be prepared for this development. Career planning and placement will become one of the most important segments of student affairs.

Futhermore, I encourage each of you to be on guard against possible unpredictable changes in your present environments, what are referred to as discontinuities. I believe these will basically result from diminished financial resources as enrollments decline. There will be numerous efforts to direct resources from student services to other areas. There will probably be reorganizations of student affairs offices and some forced retrenchment. We will have to, as never before, be able to justify and demonstrate our viability as a functional element of the institution.

Allow me to summarize in a most simplistic manner those trends and developments I have just outlined.

Our enrollments are declining. Not only will there be less potential students as the number of 18 to 21 year olds declines but there

will be a smaller percentage of that diminished group which will decide to attend college. High school students will be motivated to not attend college by a lack of jobs for college graduates and by a decreasing return on the investment required to attend college. This situation is intensified by the demise of the G. I. Bill and further complicated by our loss of political support and the emergence of strong competitors for the already scarce resource of students in the corporate college and the non-traditional institution.

New modes of operation will be demanded of us as student consumerism increases and as the competition to recruit the adult student intensifies into all out war. We will have to adjust our work schedules and programs to accommodate students who work on flex-time schedules and to tap the fertile area of Union Educational Benefits.

The adult student will be king in higher education during the next twenty years and the female student will truely be queen. We must learn how to court these two groups.

Finally, we will be faced with a student body which will be more vocationally oriented than any group has been in the last fifteen years. Not only will we have to meet the felt needs of these students, but we will have to do all we can to insure that they remain at our institutions. Retention will be the key to success and for some survival during the 1980's.

The present state of stress and disorientation, or future shock, in our profession is caused, in my opinion, by our lack of preparation for the future. We are very much like a tribe of Indians who resided by a river and whose culture and economy was based on that river. The tribe flourished for several generations using the river as a base for their civilization. Suddenly, one day without warning someone built a

dam about thirty miles above the Indian village and the river disappeared. The tribe became disoriented and suffered shattering stress. Some members of the tribe decided to stay where they were and to continue as they always had anticipating that the river would return. Some members of the tribe went off to seek a new river to continue their civilization as it always had been except in a new location. Other members of the tribe, however, decided to build a new civilization -- based on the old but adapted to function in a new environment. However, this group could not decide which locale to move to and consequently they divided into three groups. One group went to the mountain forests, another group went to the valley prairie, and the third to the shifting desert. The civilizations they developed reflected their common backgrounds but varied tremendously according to the challenges and needs that were posed by their significantly different environments.

Dams are being built on the rivers of student affairs administrators. Some of these dams have been completed, some are almost complete, while others are only beginning to be built. The end product, however, will be the same for all of us -- the river will soon no longer flow. We must begin to prepare for that time.